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Interim report on the International Year of Mountains, 2002

Note by the Secretary-General**

Summary

The Secretary-General herewith transmits the report of the Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations in accordance with General Assembly resolution 55/189.

The report describes progress made at the national, regional and international levels midway through 2002, with emphasis on activities that will ensure that the International Year of Mountains, 2002, is a catalyst for long-term, effective action. It also addresses the challenges that lie beyond the Year and provides suggestions for consideration by the General Assembly on how the Assembly might continue to promote and effectively implement sustainable development in mountain regions.

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** The report was submitted on 9 July 2002 owing to interdepartmental consultations on its format.

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I. Introduction

1. The General Assembly, at its fifty-third session, adopted resolution 53/24, in which it proclaimed 2002 as the International Year of Mountains. The resolution encouraged Governments, the United Nations system and all other actors to take advantage of the Year to increase awareness of the importance of sustainable mountain development. It also called upon Governments, national and international organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the private sector to make voluntary contributions in accordance with the guidelines of the Economic and Social Council for international years and anniversaries and to lend other forms of support to the Year.

2. In the same resolution, the General Assembly invited the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) to serve as the lead agency for the Year, in collaboration with Governments, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and other relevant organizations of the United Nations system and NGOs.

3. The present report is submitted in compliance with the request of the General Assembly that the Secretary-General report to it at its fifty-seventh session on the Year's progress. It was prepared by FAO in its capacity as lead agency for the Year and in collaboration with Governments, relevant organizations of the United Nations system and NGOs.

II. Background

4. Awareness of the importance of mountain communities and ecosystems has increased since the adoption of chapter 13 of Agenda 21, entitled "Managing fragile ecosystems: sustainable mountain development", at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in 1992.

5. Today, there is increasing recognition that mountains are fragile ecosystems, which are globally important as the source of most of the Earth's freshwater, repositories of rich biological diversity, popular destinations for recreation and tourism and areas of important cultural diversity and heritage. Occupying about one quarter of the world's land surface, mountains provide a direct life-support base for about 12 per cent of the world's population as well as goods and services to more than half of humankind. Unfortunately, many of the world's most impoverished and food-insecure people live in mountains. Consequently, there is a need to ensure the ecological integrity and economic and social viability of mountain areas, for the sake of both mountain inhabitants, whose livelihood opportunities and overall well-being are at stake, and of the inhabitants in lowland areas.

6. The decision of the General Assembly to observe an international year dedicated to mountains provides a unique opportunity. The real challenge of the International Year of Mountains lies in consolidating and capitalizing on the many efforts carried out to date to protect and sustainably develop mountain regions and, in particular, to focus observance of the Year on long-term action that would improve the quality of life in mountain communities and protect fragile mountain environments. Concerted action is needed to build and strengthen the institutional and human capability to continue with sustainable mountain development efforts far beyond 2002. Thus, the Year is intended to be far more than just a series of events and activities. It is, rather, a springboard for launching and reinforcing long-term mountain development and conservation efforts.

III. The national stage

A. National committees

7. Following the General Assembly resolution declaring the International Year of Mountains, and in accordance with Economic and Social Council guidelines for the observance of international years, the Director-General of FAO encouraged countries to establish multi-stakeholder national committees to plan and implement national observance of the Year. The national response to the International Year of Mountains has been tremendous. As of June 2002, 67 national committees for observing the International Year of Mountains were established or being established. Many include representatives of mountain people, grass-roots organizations, NGOs, civil society institutions, the private sector, United Nations agencies, national government agencies and decentralized authorities. In some countries, the national committee for the International Year of Mountains is the first national mechanism for the

sustainable development of mountains and the first opportunity to implement a holistic approach to mountains. National committees are being encouraged to continue operating beyond 2002 to help develop and implement sustainable development strategies, policies and laws designed to respond to the specific needs, priorities and conditions of the mountain areas of respective countries. To do so, many national committees require significant support in the areas of communications, capacity-building, information, strategic planning, policy development, expert consultation and financial resources.

B. Africa

8. Based on information provided to the International Year of Mountains Coordination Unit, there are presently 17 national committees or other mechanisms for observance of the International Year of Mountains in Africa in the following countries: Benin, Burundi, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, Gabon, Guinea, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Mauritius, Sierra Leone, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania.

9. In Africa, much progress has been made in the development of research- and information-sharing networks which are enhancing awareness of the importance of mountains and disseminating knowledge on sustainable mountain development to a wide constituency in Africa and beyond. These networks, although created prior to the Year, have largely benefited from the new thrust it has generated. They include:

- Mountain Forum Africa, a pan-Africa network dedicated to sharing information and experience on sustainable mountain area development
- African Highlands Initiative, an applied research programme, which is helping communities in densely populated and intensely cultivated highlands of Eastern and Central Africa sustain land productivity through a community-based approach
- African Mountains Association, which is establishing forums for enhancing and sharing scientific information on African mountains and highland ecosystems. In August 2002, the African Mountains Association, in collaboration with the Global Mountain Biodiversity Assessment, will be hosting the sixth International Conference on Sustainable Mountain Development in Africa: Agenda for Action, in the United Republic of Tanzania.

Joint efforts to counter land degradation in highlands within the framework of the post-Rio conventions and the need to conserve highlands for water resources are generating projects and programmes for the conservation and management of African highlands, such as in the Drakensberg, Rwenzori and Fouta Djallon.

C. Asia and the Pacific

10. Based on information provided to the International Year of Mountains Coordination Unit, there are presently 13 national committees or other mechanisms for observance of the Year in Asia and the Pacific in the following countries: Australia, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Indonesia, Japan, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines, the Republic of Korea, Sri Lanka and Viet Nam.

11. Tremendous progress has been made in generating awareness of the need for sustainable mountain development in Asia. Recent initiatives in the Asia and Pacific region include:

- International Seminar on Mountain Research, Nepal, March 2002
- International Conference of Mountain Children, Uttaranchal, India, May 2002
- Celebrating Mountain Women Conference, Bhutan, October 2002
- Development of a Central Asian Mountain Charter.

12. The World Conservation Union (IUCN) and many other organizations are initiating programmes and projects within the Year in Asia and building a mountain focus into their ongoing programmes. The International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD), headquartered in Nepal, is undertaking many projects. In addition, it hosts the Asia-Pacific Mountain Network, a regional node of Mountain Forum, as well as the global secretariat for Mountain Forum.

D. Europe

13. Based on information provided to the International Year of Mountains Coordination Unit, there are presently 16 national committees or other mechanisms for observance of the Year in Europe in the following countries: Andorra, Armenia, Austria, Croatia, France, Georgia, Germany, Italy, Kyrgyzstan, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Turkey and Ukraine.

14. European countries are very active in the implementation of chapter 13 and in the observance of the International Year of Mountains. Several major global events originate in Europe, including the High Summit 2002 organized by the Italian National Committee for the International Year of Mountains, the World Mountain Symposium as well as the conference on Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development in Mountain Areas, both initiated by the Government of Switzerland. In addition, many regional mountain-related events are taking place during the Year. Several institutions are supporting sustainable mountain development in Europe, including Euromontana, the International Commission for the Protection of the Alps and the European Observatory of Mountain Forests.

15. Networking has become increasingly active, with the European Mountain Forum playing an important role. Many other important mountain-related regional networks and processes have emerged. For example, Europe's national committees and focal points for the Year and other European mountain stakeholders have met twice at the European Parliament at the invitation of its "Friends of Mountains" group to share experience and to discuss collaboration. Armenia, Georgia and the Russian Federation, assisted by UNEP, are developing a legal instrument to protect the ecosystems of the Caucasian Mountains and a number of requests and proposals for cooperation and support for policy and programme development indicate the likelihood of continued involvement and action for mountain areas in Central and Eastern Europe beyond the Year.

E. Latin America and the Caribbean

16. The International Year of Mountains Coordination Unit has been notified of the existence of 13 national committees or other mechanisms for observance of the Year in Latin America in the following countries: Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Haiti, Mexico, Peru and Venezuela.

17. Action in Latin America is intense and has already had far-reaching effects on approaches to mountain issues in the region and around the world. Significant contributions to the Year include the Cusco Declaration of 2001 and the Huaraz Declaration, which was issued at the Second International Meeting of Mountain Ecosystems, held in Huaraz, Peru, from 12 to 14 June 2002. Much of the action is organized by strong networks, including the Andean Mountains Association, the Technical Cooperation Network on Upper Watershed Management in Latin America and the Caribbean, the Consortium for the Sustainable Development of the Andean Ecoregion and the International Potato Center. The Latin American node of the Mountain Forum has been particularly active in communication- and information-sharing. The Mountain Forum has also provided substantive support to the establishment of national committees for the International Year of Mountains in Latin America. In September 2002, Ecuador will host the Second World Meeting of Mountain Populations, a follow-up to the World Mountain Forum held in Chambéry, France, in June 2000.

F. Near East and North Africa

18. There are presently six national committees or other mechanisms for observance of the International Year of Mountains in the Near East and North Africa, established in the following countries: the Islamic Republic of Iran, Lebanon, Morocco, the Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia and Yemen.

19. Mountains are an important part of the social, economic and cultural life of countries in the Near East and North Africa region and action is continuing to grow. Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkey are embarking on the Regional Watershed Management Training project to build capacity to manage watersheds effectively. Other examples of progress are a mountain law in Morocco, mountain programmes in Morocco and Tunisia and a nationwide project on watershed management and forestry in Yemen.

G. North America

20. Canada and the United States of America have initiated many activities to observe the Year. The Banff Centre for Mountain Culture in Canada and The Mountain Institute (TMI) are leading several initiatives. The Banff Centre is organizing the Banff Mountain Summit 2002 — Extreme Landscape: Challenge and Celebration, at the Banff National Park from 27 to 29 October 2002. TMI played a key role in organizing the global launch of the International Year of Mountains at United Nations Headquarters on 11 December 2001 in association with the International Year of Mountains Focus Group and FAO. The Banff Centre, TMI and the Mexican Indigenous Association for Sustainable Development established a regional Mountain Forum node to serve Canada, the United States of America and Mexico. It is currently maintained by the Banff Centre.

IV. The global stage

A. International Partnership and Platform

21. The International Year of Mountains is being intensely observed around the world at many national and international events through a large number of initiatives and by a great diversity of institutions and individuals. These include conferences, meetings of mountain people, film festivals, concerts, exhibits, book launchings, mountain climbs and hikes and many other kinds of activities. In addition, several major global events are serving as venues for sharing information on a large number of issues and in many sectors. These diversified initiatives will lead to more effective partnerships and plans for long-term collaborative action to achieve the objectives of chapter 13. An International Partnership for Sustainable Development in Mountain Regions will be presented as a type two outcome at the World Summit on Sustainable Development, to be held in Johannesburg, South Africa, from 26 August to 4 September 2002. The purpose of the Partnership, which was initiated by the Swiss Government, FAO and UNEP, is to enable more effective implementation of chapter 13. It will build on the Inter-Agency Group on Mountains, which has been the main institutional mechanism to advise on the implementation of chapter 13 as well as on the planning and implementation of the Year. The Group is comprised of United Nations agencies and other key international institutions that are involved in the implementation of chapter 13. The Partnership is conceived as a mechanism for improving, strengthening and promoting greater cooperation between major groups, donors, implementing agencies, NGOs, private sector, mountain communities, scientists, field practitioners and other stakeholders. It will be guided by clearly agreed goals, its operations will be based on commitments made by partners and implementation will be supported through better linkages between institutions and improved monitoring systems.

22. The Partnership is expected to be reinforced at the culminating event of the International Year of Mountains, the Bishkek Global Mountain Summit, to be held in Bishkek from 28 October to 1 November 2002. Summit participants are expected to issue a declaration called the Bishkek Mountain Platform that builds on the outcomes of the major events that have occurred leading up to and during the International Year of Mountains and affirms the Partnership's principles, recommendations and commitments. The Platform will draw on contributions from countries and regions, researchers, women, children, mountain people's organizations, NGOs and United Nations agencies who participated in the following global events and other key events leading up to the International Year of Mountains, and will formulate recommendations for concrete action towards sustainable mountain development.

B. Major global events

- **World Mountain Symposium 2001: Community Development between Subsidy, Subsidiarity and Sustainability**

  The four-day symposium, held in Interlaken, Switzerland, from 30 September to 4 October 2001, supported preparations for the Year, with an emphasis on determining ways and means to enhance autonomous development in mountains of the industrialized, developing and transition countries of the world. The conference was sponsored by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation and the Centre for Development and Environment of the University of Berne

- **International Conference of Mountain Children**

  Children from 13 to 18 years of age met from 7 to 21 May 2002 in Uttaranchal, India, at a conference organized by the Research Advocacy and Communication in Himalayan Areas to discuss the needs of mountain children, provide recommendations for the Bishkek Mountain Platform and launch the Mountain Children's Forum. This Internet-based forum is a platform for children to represent themselves and contributes to the Global Movement for Children, an initiative highlighted at the United Nations special session on children in 2002

- **High Summit 2002: International Conference around the Continents' Highest Mountains**

  Mountain people, scientists and representatives of NGOs, United Nations agencies and the media participated in simultaneous transcontinental, multimedia regional conferences near some of the world's highest peaks in Africa, Asia, Europe and Latin America from 6 to 10 May 2002. Sponsored by the Italian National Committee for the International Year of Mountains, the event used Internet and videoconference technology to support an international debate and to develop recommendations for action on five cornerstones of mountain development: water, culture, economy, risk and policy

- **Second International Meeting of Mountain Ecosystems, "Peru, country of mountains towards 2020: water, life and production"**

  Indigenous people from Peru and Ecuador, representatives of mountain communities in the Himalayas and many others met in Huaraz, Peru, from 12 to 14 June 2002 at a conference organized by the National Committee of Peru for the International Year of Mountains to produce the Huaraz Declaration on Sustainable Development of Mountain Ecosystems

- **International Conference on Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development in Mountain Regions**

  Held in Adelboden, Switzerland, from 16 to 20 June 2002 this conference, sponsored by the Swiss Federal Office for Agriculture, brought together stakeholders from around the world to explore ways of enhancing cooperation in achieving the objectives of two chapters of Agenda 21, chapter 13 on sustainable mountain development and chapter 14 on sustainable agriculture and rural development, and to contribute input to the World Summit on Sustainable Development. Conference participants issued the Adelboden Declaration

- **Johannesburg 2002: The World Summit on Sustainable Development**

  At the World Summit on Sustainable Development, to be held from 26 August to 4 September 2002, delegates will review progress made on chapter 13 over the last decade and the International Partnership for Sustainable Development in Mountain Regions will be presented

- **Second World Meeting of Mountain Populations**

  Representatives of 115 countries will discuss the challenges facing mountain communities worldwide and issue a declaration at a conference to be held in Quito, Ecuador, from 20 to 24 September 2002, organized by the Association of Mountain Populations of the World and El Centro de Investigación de los Movimientos Sociales del Ecuador

- **Celebrating Mountain Women**

  A declaration containing recommendations for improved responses to the needs of mountain women and the launch of a new long-term programme for mountain women at ICIMOD are two of the expected outcomes of this conference, to be held in Thimphu, Bhutan, from 1 to 4 October 2002. The conference is organized by ICIMOD and the Mountain Forum

- **Bishkek Global Mountain Summit**

  Participants in the culminating event of the Year are expected to issue the Bishkek Mountain Platform, a framework for action, and consolidate the Partnership presented at the World Summit on Sustainable Development. The Global Mountain Summit is being organized by the Government of Kyrgyzstan, with assistance from UNEP, and is planned for 28 October to 1 November 2002 in Bishkek.

C. Global communications

23. Many organizations are implementing global communications initiatives to raise awareness of mountain issues and solutions to mountain problems. They include FAO, UNDP, UNEP, UNESCO, Panos, TMI, the Banff Centre for Mountain Culture, the Mountain Forum, IUCN, ICIMOD, the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research centres and many others. These efforts are bringing mountains to global public attention for the first time and feeding an emerging wave of public awareness of mountains and a global commitment to projects and programmes that will help to bring lasting change to mountain areas.

24. FAO, through its International Year of Mountains Coordination Unit, is helping to fuel the movement to protect mountain ecosystems and improve the well-being of mountain people by implementing a global communications plan for the Year developed in collaboration with members of the Inter-Agency Group on Mountains. The purpose of the plan is to facilitate a successful International Year of Mountains by translating communications strategies into actions, setting priorities, and integrating and coordinating the communication efforts of other International Year of Mountains observers. The primary audiences of the plan are mountain people, national committees for the observance of the Year, Governments, donors, stakeholders, the general public, the staff of United Nations agencies and the hundreds of organizations worldwide — both grass-roots and mainstream — that have a stake in one or more of the Year's key issues but are not yet involved in implementing chapter 13. The objectives of the plan are to:

(a) Demonstrate by example the participatory approaches that must be applied to achieve sustainable mountain development by including the opinions and knowledge of indigenous mountain people in communications vehicles, events and activities in ways that are meaningful, respectful and equal in profile to those of scientists, development experts, politicians, celebrities and world leaders;

(b) Ensure that audiences, particularly mountain communities, and those who have demonstrated a prior interest in an International Year of Mountains theme, have the information they need when they need it to participate fully and effectively in the Year;

(c) Build awareness among the world's young people — tomorrow's decision makers — of the Year's key messages and ways they can contribute to the sustainable development of mountain areas;

(d) Motivate and assist mountain communities, policy makers, NGOs and others to conceptualize, initiate, participate in and successfully implement action that leads to sustainable development in mountain communities;

(e) Build hope, optimism and momentum by convincing audiences that sustainable development and participatory, holistic and integrated approaches work;

(f) Build commitment to and financial support for research, national strategies and programmes, policies and laws that will protect and conserve mountain ecosystems and cultures;

(g) Position the International Year of Mountains as a springboard for long-term action that will strengthen mountain communities and protect mountain ecosystems.

25. Thanks to the generous contributions of Austria, Italy and Switzerland to the International Year of Mountains trust fund, FAO is implementing a significant proportion of the plan and much has been achieved. The foundation of the FAO communications programme for the Year is the International Year of Mountains web site at www.mountains2002.org, which serves as an organizing and coordinating tool, a news service on International Year of Mountains activities and a distribution tool for communications materials, including background information for journalists, educators, the public and others interested in mountain issues. Currently, the web site is receiving about 500,000 hits per month. It is the primary vehicle for distributing International Year of Mountains toolkits to national committees and others who are implementing their own communications programmes.

26. The International Year of Mountains Coordination Unit is implementing an intensive global media-relations programme and an outreach programme to help NGOs, civil society and grass-roots organizations around the world communicate about mountain issues to their members and audiences. Outreach targets include networks for agriculture, wildlife and nature conservation, energy, research, development, health, poverty, labour, women, children, tourism, recreation, mining, water, forests, education,

finance and spirituality. The Unit is also supporting the coordination, planning and implementation of major global events. These include the successful global launch of the International Year of Mountains at United Nations Headquarters on 11 December 2001, the High Summit 2002, the World Summit on Sustainable Development and the Bishkek Global Mountain Summit.

27. The Unit's communications efforts and those of its many partners are increasing awareness and support for sustainable mountain development. However, much more could be done with additional resources. A comprehensive global communications and education programme that continues for several years beyond 2002 is essential to achieving the objectives of chapter 13 and implementing the recommendations of the Year.

D. Networking and information exchange

28. Networking and information exchange about mountains has advanced greatly since the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in 1992, most notably through the establishment of the Mountain Forum in 1995. Mountain Forum is an electronic network of organizations and individuals designed to promote and advocate global action towards equitable and ecologically sustainable mountain development. This is achieved through sharing information, mutual support and advocacy. Mountain Forum consists of NGOs, universities, Governments, international agencies, private-sector institutions and individuals from around the world and has successfully built on existing networks. It has a global membership of about 3,500 members and institutions. Many more individuals and institutions are associated with one of its regional nodes in Asia and the Pacific, Latin America, Africa, Europe and North America. Mountain Forum is filling a particularly important role during the Year by enabling links between individuals, NGOs, Governments and other entities, particularly at the regional level, and by facilitating consultations that are helping to develop the Bishkek Mountain Platform. In addition, the organization is helping to adapt overall strategies to the specific conditions of different mountain areas and to ensure that information about local experiences is made available and shared.

29. Other regional-level networking mechanisms have also been playing an important role during the Year. In Latin America, for example, the Andean Mountains Association and the Latin American Technical Cooperation Network on Watershed Management, supported by FAO, focus the skills and experience of scholars, educators, researchers and practitioners on collaborative action. The African Mountains Association, in close collaboration with Mountain Forum and other partners, is playing a similar role on the African continent, as is the Asia/Pacific Mountain Network in the Asia and Pacific region.

E. International action

30. A large number of international organizations are launching mountain-related initiatives or integrating mountains into their programmes of work for the Year and beyond. They include the Aga Khan Development Network, the Association of Mountain Populations of the World, the Centre for Development and Environment, the International Potato Center, the Global Environment Facility, the German Technical Cooperation, the International Centre for Research in Agroforestry, the International Livestock Research Institute, the World Conservation Union, the International Union of Forestry Research Organizations, The Mountain Institute, the International Mountaineering and Climbing Federation, UNDP, UNEP, UNESCO, the United Nations University, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation and the World Bank.

31. A number of global initiatives have been launched as well and many ongoing projects and programmes have received additional impetus by the Year. They include the Global Mountain Biodiversity Assessment, the Tropical Montane Cloud Forest Initiative, the Mountain Research Initiative and the Global Observation Research Initiative in Alpine Environments. The journal, *Mountain Research and Development*, edited by the Centre for Development and Environment, has continued to be the principal publication reporting comprehensively on mountain-related issues. It is impossible to do justice to all the undertakings in this report. Rather, the extent of international action can best be acknowledged in a more comprehensive and balanced review when the Year is over.

V. Achievements

32. The International Year of Mountains has already achieved significant results. It has:

(a) Led to the founding, by Permanent Representatives of the United Nations, of the International Year of Mountains Focus Group, which supports and animates observance and follow-up to the Year. The Focus Group includes representatives of Austria, Bhutan, Bolivia, Ethiopia, France, Guatemala, Iceland, Italy, Jamaica, Kyrgyzstan, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lesotho, Peru, Slovenia and Switzerland. It is a driving force behind the global movement to protect the world's mountains and to help create the conditions in which mountain people can achieve their own goals and aspirations;

(b) Increased the accessibility, quantity and quality of information on mountains and mountain people;

(c) Increased public awareness of the importance of mountains to the Earth's fundamental life-sustaining systems, of the fragility of mountain ecosystems, of the consequences of their degradation and of effective approaches to sustainable mountain development;

(d) Stimulated the establishment of 67 national committees and positioned them as mechanisms for developing national strategic plans and policies to achieve sustainable mountain development;

(e) Enhanced understanding of the need for interdisciplinary research and information sharing about mountains and stimulated the development of a comprehensive, global research agenda on mountains that will support decision-making and policy-making;

(f) Increased awareness of the need to safeguard and build on the traditional knowledge of mountain people and to respect indigenous practices, expertise and authorities;

(g) Increased demand by countries for programmes and projects to achieve sustainable mountain development;

(h) Increased donor interest in and support for long-term investment in mountain ecosystems and communities;

(i) Broadened the diversity of organizations and individuals dedicated to sustainable mountain development and stimulated the development of new mountain initiatives and the integration of mountains into normative programmes;

(j) Strengthened implementation of chapter 13 by identifying, through intensive international, regional, national and community dialogue, gaps in knowledge, ways of working and institutions;

(k) Strengthened and expanded the alliance of organizations that are committed to implementing chapter 13 and consolidated the alliance through the International Partnership for Sustainable Development in Mountain Regions;

(l) Focused global commitment to and resources for sustainable mountain development on a widely supported framework for action, expressed in the proposed Bishkek Mountain Platform, to ensure more efficient and effective approaches to achieving the goals of chapter 13.

VI. Challenges

33. At present, midway through the International Year of Mountains, the challenges to stimulating the long-term action needed to implement chapter 13 are in the areas of national involvement and partnership support.

(a) **National involvement**. While the response to the call for national committees to observe the International Year of Mountains is exceedingly encouraging, many mountainous countries have not formally participated in the International Year of Mountains. Their involvement in the Year and follow-up is essential to the implementation of chapter 13 given the transboundary nature of mountains and the reality that only countries have the power to implement national strategies for sustainable mountain development, to enact enabling policies and laws and to develop compensation mechanisms for environmental services and goods provided by mountain areas. The involvement of lowland countries is also crucial because highland-lowland relationships, flows of investment and other factors mean that mountain countries cannot undertake sustainable mountain development in isolation. Many countries do not have the institutional environments, expertise and financial resources to implement and invest in sustainable mountain development. Education, training,

capacity-building, expert consultation, institutional strengthening and investment are required;

(b) **Partnership support**. The evolution of a strengthened Partnership and the establishment of the Bishkek Mountain Platform, a framework for action, has the potential to enhance the effectiveness of efforts to implement chapter 13. However, these mechanisms require improved leadership, mountain-specific information bases, communication, monitoring, accountability and coordination to achieve results. The potential of the International Year of Mountains was limited by the resources made available for this undertaking. This points to a larger and continuing constraint on effectively implementing chapter 13 and to maintaining and building upon the investment in the Year. Mountains present tremendous potential for addressing the world's social, environmental and economic problems. However, increased and more effectively applied investment is required.

VII. Recommendations

34. Significant progress has been achieved by the International Year of Mountains, but much remains to be done. The Year appears already to have acted as a catalyst for long-term, effective action to implement chapter 13, as intended. The present momentum should be sustained to consolidate and build on results achieved so far. In this regard, the General Assembly may wish to consider the following courses of action that could be taken by Governments.

(a) **Support the continued establishment of national committees, focal points and other mechanisms for sustainable mountain development;**

(b) **Support the evolution of national committees and other mechanisms for the Year and assist them with the transition from focusing on observing the Year to developing goals and strategies for the sustainable development of mountains;**

(c) **Support the involvement of International Year of Mountains national committees in observing the International Year of Freshwater, 2003, to take advantage of opportunities for synergies;**

(d) **Support national efforts to develop strategic plans for the sustainable development of mountains, enabling policies and laws, programmes and projects;**

(e) **Support transboundary approaches to sustainable development of mountain ranges and information sharing;**

(f) **Support the development and implementation of global, regional and national communications programmes to build on the awareness and momentum for change established by the International Year of Mountains;**

(g) **Support capacity-building and education programmes to enhance awareness of best practices in sustainable mountain development and the nature of relationships between highland and lowland areas;**

(h) **Support the efforts of the International Partnership for Sustainable Development in Mountain Regions and the implementation of the Bishkek Mountain Platform at the international, regional and national levels and encourage national organizations to join;**

(i) **Encourage donor and private-sector investment in sustainable mountain development;**

(j) **Encourage the United Nations system to strengthen the coordination of chapter 13 to achieve more effective implementation;**

(k) **Promote the establishment of mountain disaggregated databases to support research, decision-making and planning;**

(l) **Make international organizations involved in sustainable mountain development aware of country needs and achievements.**